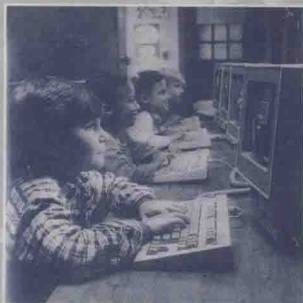


# THE AMERICAN SCHOOL



1642-  
1996



FOURTH  
EDITION

# JOEL SPRING

# *The American School*

## *1642–1996*

---

FOURTH EDITION

*Joel Spring*

*State University of New York  
College at New Paltz*

*The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.*

*New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá Caracas Lisbon  
London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal New Delhi  
San Juan Singapore Sydney Tokyo Toronto*

**McGraw-Hill**

A Division of The McGraw-Hill Companies



*This book was developed by Lane Akers, Inc.  
This book was set in Times Roman by Graphic World, Inc.  
The editor was Lane Akers;  
the production supervisor was Annette Mayeski.  
The cover was designed by Karen K. Quigley.  
Project supervision was done by Tage Publishing Service, Inc.  
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder*

*Cover Photos*

*Top right, bottom right, and background: Culver Pictures.  
Top left, bottom left, and center right: Corbis/Bettmann.*

**THE AMERICAN SCHOOL  
1642–1996**

Copyright ©1997, 1994 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.  
Previously published under the titles of: *The American School 1642–1990*,  
copyright © 1990 by Longman, all rights reserved, and *The American School  
1642–1985*, copyright © 1986 by Longman, all rights reserved. Printed in the  
United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright  
Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any  
form or by any means, or stored in a data base or retrieval system, without the prior  
written permission of the publisher.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC DOC 9 0 9 8 7 6

ISBN 0-07-060560-2

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Spring, Joel H.

The American school, 1642–1996 / Joel Spring.—4th ed.

p. cm.

Rev. ed. of: The American school, 1642–1993. c1994.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-07-060560-2

1. Education—United States—History. 2. Education—Social aspects—  
United States—History. I. Spring, Joel H. American school, 1642–1993.  
II. Title.

LA205.S64 1997

370'.973—dc20

96-22612

# Preface

The influence of teaching multicultural education courses for six years and doing research on the history of Native Americans has significantly changed my perspective on the writing of history and the evolution of the public school system in the United States. In this seventh edition, I added material that emphasizes the attempt to use public schools to ensure the dominance of a Protestant Anglo-American culture in the United States. Certainly, this is not a new theme in educational history. Carl Kaestle's *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and the American Society, 1780-1860* documented the desire of common school advocates to protect Protestant Anglo-American values.\*

In order to highlight the attempt by the United States government to ensure the dominance of Protestant Anglo-American culture and the clash of cultural values regarding education, I have added a new Chapter 3, "The Ghost Dance and the Schooling of Native Americans." The importance of multicultural issues during the founding of common schools is discussed in a new Chapter 5, "The Common School and the Threat of Cultural Pluralism," which deals with the threat posed by Irish immigrants, African Americans, and Native Americans to the dominance of Protestant Anglo-American culture.

Also, I revised other sections of the book to emphasize cultural issues. For instance, in Chapter 4, my discussion of Noah Webster now focuses on: "Noah Webster: Nationalism and the Creation of a Dominant Culture." In Chapter 10, my discussion of the immigration of southern and eastern Europeans between the 1890s and the 1920s focuses on "The New Culture Wars." In Chapter 12, I emphasize the use of intelligence tests to provide pseudo-scientific proof of the superiority of Anglo-Americans in a section titled "Measurement, Democracy, and the Superiority of Anglo-Americans." In Chapter 16, which discusses the civil rights movement from the 1950s to the present, I emphasize cultural issues in revised sections titled "Bilingual Education: The Culture Wars Continued" and "Multicultural Education, Immigration, and the Culture Wars." In the conclusion of the book in Chapter 17, "Conclusion: Ideological Managment, the Protestant Ethic, and Na-

\*Carl Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

tive American Culture,” I raise questions regarding the effect of cultural values on the history of the United States.

I added other sections to update material. In Chapter 7, I added material on the role of women in the expansion of schooling in the western states and territories, “Female Teachers Civilize the West.” In Chapter 13, I used Jeffrey Mirel’s excellent study of the Detroit school system to provide an outline of urban school politics in the twentieth century in a section titled “Conclusion: The Rise and Fall of the Detroit School System.” And in Chapter 17, I added material on the Clinton administration and the Republicans’ *Contract With America* in sections titled “The Reagan, Bush, and Clinton Years: National Standards, Choice, and Savage Inequalities” and “*Contract With America* and the End of Education as a Source of Equality of Opportunity.”

Joel Spring

# *Contents in Brief*

<i>PREFACE</i>	xiii
<i>Chapter</i> ① Thinking Critically about History: Ideological Management and the Culture Wars	1
<i>Chapter</i> ② Religion and Authority in Colonial America	5
<i>Chapter</i> ③ The Ghost Dance and the Schooling of Native Americans	32
<i>Chapter</i> ④ Nationalism, Moral Reform, and Charity in the New Republic	52
<i>Chapter</i> ⑤ The Common School and the Threat of Cultural Pluralism	79
<i>Chapter</i> ⑥ The Ideology and Politics of the Common School	96
<i>Chapter</i> ⑦ Organizing the American School: The Nineteenth-Century Schoolmarm	123
<i>Chapter</i> 8 Education as Deculturalization: Native Americans and Puerto Ricans	156
<i>Chapter</i> 9 Education and Segregation: Asian Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans	175
<i>Chapter</i> 10 Schooling and the New Corporate Order	198
<i>Chapter</i> 11 Education and Human Capital	220
<i>Chapter</i> 12 Meritocracy: The Experts Take Charge	252
<i>Chapter</i> 13 The Politics of Education	281
<i>Chapter</i> 14 Big Bird: Movies, Radio, and Television Join Schools as Public Educators	301
<i>Chapter</i> 15 Education and National Policy	338
<i>Chapter</i> 16 The Great Civil Rights Movement and the New Culture Wars	358
<i>Chapter</i> 17 Conservatism and the Culture Wars at the End of the Century	385
<i>INDEX</i>	411

# Contents

PREFACE	xiii
Chapter 1 Thinking Critically about History: Ideological Management and the Culture Wars	1
<i>Ideological Management and the Culture Wars</i>	2
Chapter 2 Religion and Authority in Colonial America	5
<i>The Role of Education in Colonial Society</i>	6
<i>Authority and Social Status in Colonial New England</i>	7
<i>Colonialism and Educational Policy</i>	14
<i>Freedom of Thought and the Establishment of Academies</i>	17
<i>Education and Social Mobility</i>	21
<i>The Family and the Child</i>	24
<i>Conclusion</i>	28
Chapter 3 The Ghost Dance and the Schooling of Native Americans	32
<i>The Ghost Dance</i>	33
<i>Cultural and Racial Superiority</i>	34
<i>Educational and Cultural Differences</i>	36
<i>Early Native American Educational Programs</i>	38
<i>Schooling and the Colonization of the "Five Civilized Tribes"</i>	40
<i>Thomas L. McKenney: The Cultural Power of Schooling</i>	43

	<i>Native Americans, Education, and Social Class</i>	44
	<i>The Missionary Educators</i>	46
	<i>Language and Native American Culture</i>	47
	<i>Conclusion</i>	49
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Nationalism, Moral Reform, and Charity in the New Republic</b>	<b>52</b>
	<i>Noah Webster: Nationalism and the Creation of a Dominant Culture</i>	54
	<i>Thomas Jefferson: A Natural Aristocracy</i>	57
	<i>Moral Reform and Faculty Psychology</i>	60
	<i>Charity Schools, the Lancasterian System, and Prisons</i>	62
	<i>Institutional Change and the American College</i>	68
	<i>Public versus Private Schools</i>	73
	<i>Conclusion: Continuing Issues in American Education</i>	74
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>The Common School and the Threat of Cultural Pluralism</b>	<b>79</b>
	<i>The Irish Catholics</i>	80
	<i>Africans</i>	84
	<i>Native Americans</i>	89
	<i>Conclusion</i>	93
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>The Ideology and Politics of the Common School</b>	<b>96</b>
	<i>The Ideology of the Common School Movement</i>	98
	<i>Workingmen and the Struggle for a Republican Education</i>	106
	<i>The Whigs and the Democrats</i>	110
	<i>The Continuing Debate about the Common School Ideal</i>	114
	<i>Conclusion</i>	119
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Organizing the American School: The Nineteenth-Century Schoolmarm</b>	<b>123</b>
	<i>The American Teacher</i>	124
	<i>The Maternal Model of Instruction</i>	133
	<i>The Evolution of the Bureaucratic Model</i>	138
	<i>McGuffey's Readers and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>	145
	<i>Female Teachers Civilize the West</i>	150
	<i>Conclusion</i>	152



Chapter 8	Education as Deculturalization: Native Americans and Puerto Ricans	156
	<i>Native Americans: Reservations and Boarding Schools</i>	157
	<i>The “Meriam Report”</i>	162
	<i>Puerto Ricans</i>	163
	<i>The Americanization of Puerto Rico</i>	165
	<i>Conclusion: Methods of Deculturalization and Americanization</i>	170
Chapter 9	Education and Segregation: Asian Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans	175
	<i>Asian Americans</i>	176
	<i>African Americans</i>	179
	<i>Resisting Segregation</i>	184
	<i>The Second Crusade</i>	185
	<i>Mexican Americans</i>	186
Chapter 10	Schooling and the New Corporate Order	198
	<i>Extending the Social Role of the School</i>	199
	<i>The New Culture Wars</i>	206
	<i>The Changing Classroom—Herbart, Dewey, and Thorndike</i>	207
	<i>Conclusion</i>	217
Chapter 11	Education and Human Capital	220
	<i>The High School</i>	221
	<i>Vocational Education, Vocational Guidance, and the Junior High School</i>	233
	<i>Public Benefit or Corporate Greed?</i>	241
	<i>The Meaning of Equality of Opportunity</i>	247
Chapter 12	Meritocracy: The Experts Take Charge	252
	<i>Meritocracy and Efficient Management</i>	254
	<i>Measurement, Democracy, and the Superiority of Anglo-Americans</i>	263
	<i>Special Classrooms and Bureaucratic Order</i>	269
	<i>The University and Meritocracy</i>	270
	<i>Conclusion</i>	278

Chapter 13	<b>The Politics of Education</b>	281
	<i>The Politics of Professionalism: Teachers versus Administrators</i>	282
	<i>The Rise of the National Education Association</i>	287
	<i>The Political Changes of the Depression Years</i>	289
	<i>Conclusion: The Rise and Fall of the Detroit School System</i>	297
Chapter 14	<b>Big Bird: Movies, Radio, and Television Join Schools as Public Educators</b>	301
	<i>The Censorship Debate</i>	302
	<i>Educators and the Movies</i>	305
	<i>The Production Code: Creating a Political and Moral Conscience</i>	311
	<i>Should Commercial Radio or Educators Determine National Culture?</i>	314
	<i>Crime and Gore on Children's Radio</i>	319
	<i>Children's Television Workshop and Sesame Street</i>	325
	<i>Conclusion</i>	332
Chapter 15	<b>Education and National Policy</b>	338
	<i>The Cold War and National Education Policy</i>	340
	<i>The War on Poverty</i>	350
	<i>Conclusion</i>	355
Chapter 16	<b>The Great Civil Rights Movement and the New Culture Wars</b>	358
	<i>School Desegregation</i>	359
	<i>The Beginning of the Choice Movement: Magnet Schools</i>	365
	<i>Native Americans</i>	368
	<i>Indian Education: A National Tragedy</i>	369
	<i>Mexican Americans</i>	371
	<i>The Great Civil Rights Movement Expands Its Reach</i>	373
	<i>Bilingual Education: The Culture Wars Continued</i>	375
	<i>Multicultural Education, Immigration, and the Culture Wars</i>	378

Chapter 17	Conservatism and the Culture Wars at the End of the Century	385
	<i>The Religious Right and School Prayer</i>	385
	<i>The Nixon Administration and the Conservative Reaction</i>	386
	<i>Accountability and the Increasing Power of the Standardized Test</i>	389
	<i>The Political Nature of Classroom Instruction</i>	391
	<i>The Politics of Education</i>	394
	<i>The Reagan, Bush, and Clinton Years: National Standards, Choice, and Savage Inequalities</i>	396
	<i>The End of the Common School: Choice, Privatization, and Charter Schools</i>	400
	<i>Contract With America and the End of Education as a Source of Equality of Opportunity</i>	404
	<i>Conclusion: Ideological Management, the Protestant Ethic, and Native American Culture</i>	406
INDEX		411

# *Thinking Critically About History*

## *Ideological Management and the Culture Wars*

I wrote this book with the intention of combining a particular approach to teaching history with a broader perspective on the content of the history of education. The reader should be presented with a variety of historical interpretations and historical issues. The presentation of material in this fashion allows the reader to think about history as opposed to being a passive recipient of facts. The reader should consider which interpretation of history is correct.

The most important question in interpreting history is “Why?” For example: Why were public schools established? Historians might agree on dates and personalities involved in historical events, but they might not agree upon motives. For instance: Were public schools established to assure that all citizens would be able to protect their political and economic rights? Were public schools established to protect the power of an elite by controlling the economic and political ideas taught to students? Were public schools established to assure the dominance of Protestant Anglo-American culture over Native American, Irish American, and African American cultures? Were public schools necessary to ensure the education of the whole population? These questions exemplify issues debated in the writing of history.

The answers to these questions have important implications for a person’s future choices and actions. The answers shape images and feelings about the past. Many people do not remember the details of history, but they do develop images and emotions about past events. For instance, if a person concludes that public schools were established to protect the political and economic rights of citizens, then their attitudes and feelings about public schools will be quite different from those of a person who concludes that public schools were established to protect the political and economic power of an elite. Or, for example, if a person concludes that the establishment of public schools was necessary for the education of all children, then their attitudes regarding privatization of schools will be quite different from those who conclude the opposite.

Therefore, thinking about history involves both an intellectual consideration of conflicting interpretations, and issues and reflection about emotions and images.

For example, at an early age a person might be taught a history that is designed to build an emotional attachment, in the form of patriotism, to the political and economic organization of the United States. Later in life this person's emotional feelings about the United States might be challenged if the person reads a critical history of the American past.

One's knowledge, images, and emotions regarding the past have an impact on future actions. Individuals often make decisions based on what they believe to be the historical purposes and goals of an institution. The varieties of interpretations presented in this book provide the reader with an opportunity to judge past events and think about future actions. Like historians who weave together the drama of the past, consumers of history have their own political and social opinions. By engaging in an intellectual dialogue with the historical text, readers should be able to clarify their opinions about educational institutions and about the relationship of education to other institutions and to social events.

## ***IDEOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT AND THE CULTURE WARS***

A central issue in the history of public schools is the attempt to ensure the domination of a Protestant Anglo-American culture in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The struggle over cultural domination in the United States began with the English invasion of North America in the sixteenth century and continues today in the debate over multiculturalism.

The "culture wars," a term originating in the work of Ira Shor, is a distinguishing characteristic of American history.<sup>2</sup> English colonists declared their superiority over Native American cultures and attempted to impose their culture on Native Americans. In contrast, Native Americans found English culture to be exploitative and repressive, and they resisted attempts by colonists to transform their cultures. The hope of the leaders of the newly formed United States government was to create a national culture that would be unified around Protestant Anglo-American values. One reason for the nineteenth-century development of public schools was to ensure the dominance of Anglo-American values that were being challenged by Irish immigration, Native Americans, and African Americans. Public schools became defenders of Anglo-American values with each new wave of immigrants. In the twentieth century, the culture wars are characterized by Americanization programs, civil rights movements demanding representation of minority cultures in public schools, and the multicultural debate.\*

The concept of cultural perspective is important for understanding the culture wars. For instance, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some Native Americans decided that literacy might be an important tool for protecting their tribal lands and culture. In contrast, many whites considered the education of Native Americans as a means for acquiring Native American lands and transforming

\*For a discussion of the culture wars see Chapters 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 16, and 17.

Native American cultures. This difference in perspective resulted in both major misunderstandings and a cultural war that continues to the present.\*

The mixture of cultures in the United States has resulted in the necessity of constantly asking: How do other cultures perceive this event? In the nineteenth century, many Irish Catholics believed the public schools were attempting to destroy the Catholic faith.<sup>†</sup> In the twentieth century, many educators considered the development of separate curriculum tracks in high school a means of serving individual differences. In contrast, many African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans considered separate curriculum tracks as another means of providing them with an inferior education.<sup>‡</sup>

The culture wars are one aspect of what I call ideological management. Ideological management involves the creation and distribution of knowledge in a society. Schools play a central role in the distribution of particular knowledge to a society. Public schools were established to distribute knowledge to children and youth. Because knowledge is not neutral, there has existed a continuing debate about the political, social, and economic content of schooling. Presently, for example, there is a heated debate over the content and purpose of multicultural education in public schools. How this debate is decided will have important implications for shaping a student's perspective on the nature of society and politics in the United States.<sup>§</sup> Also, in the 1990s, a major debate erupted between liberals and conservatives led by Newt Gingrich over the role of public schools in providing equality of opportunity.<sup>§</sup>

Recent historical interpretations stress the importance of the influence of differing political and economic groups on the content of knowledge and the cultural values distributed by schools. In the same fashion, political and economic pressures influence the knowledge and cultural values distributed by sources other than educational institutions. Ideological management refers to the effect of these political and economic forces on the ideas disseminated to society.

I include mass media along with public schools as important managers of ideas and cultural values disseminated to children and youth. Consequently, this book includes sections on the development of movies, radio, and television. In the twentieth century, media is considered the third educator of children along with schools and the family. Currently, schools and media compete for influence over children's minds and national culture.<sup>¶</sup>

In the book's conclusion, I discuss the importance of ideological management and cultural values. In the framework of ideological management, the current question is: What should be the culture or cultures of the public school curriculum? Should the population of the United States be united by a single culture or should the United States be composed of distinct cultural traditions? What would North America be like today if English colonists had adopted the cultural values of Native Americans?

\*See Chapter 3.

†See Chapter 5.

‡This issue is important in the history of urban schools discussed in Chapter 13.

§See Chapter 17.

¶See Chapter 14.

## NOTES

1. My views on multicultural history were influenced by the work of Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993) and the research I did for my book *The Cultural Transformation of a Native American Family and Its Tribe 1763–1995: A Basket of Apples* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1996).
2. Ira Shore, *Cultural Wars: School and Society in the Conservative Restoration 1969–1984* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).
3. As an example of this debate see Catherine Cornbleth and Dexter Waugh's *The Great Speckled Bird: Multicultural Politics and Education Policymaking* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1995).

## *Religion and Authority in Colonial Education*

“Come over and help us,” a Native American is depicted as saying while standing as the central figure on the Seal of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay, 1629, holding an arrow in one hand and a bow in the other with a band of leaves covering his midsection.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, English colonists sincerely believed they were bringing a superior civilization to a “heathen” and “uncivilized” people. This seal symbolized the feelings of cultural superiority that the English brought to the soil of North America.

To the surprise of colonists, Native Americans did not rush to accept the offer of religious and cultural conversion. Native Americans responded by offering food and aid that made it possible for Europeans to survive and expand, while Indians experienced the catastrophic effects of European-introduced diseases. For Native Americans, the primary problem presented by the European invasion was physical and cultural survival. Frequently, this meant warfare or finding a means of protecting cultural traditions while adapting to the social and economic changes brought by Europeans.

For English colonists, the cultural resistance of Native Americans was an affront to the teachings of Christ and a hindrance to colonial expansion. Motivated by sincere religious convictions and a belief in the superiority of English culture, European Americans engaged in an educational crusade to turn “heathen” and “uncivilized” Indians into models of Protestant and English culture.

It is my hypothesis that the educational crusade for the religious and cultural conversion of Native Americans contributed to the nineteenth-century vision of the public school as the primary means for ending crime, poverty, and social and political conflict. As I will argue in later chapters, there was little difference in the minds of nineteenth-century Protestant public school advocates between “savage” Indians, unrepentant criminals, the rebellious poor, and the “heathen” Irish-Catholic immigrant. In fact, the English and Protestant sense of cultural and moral superiority originally developed during the twelfth-century English invasion of Ireland. Many English colonialists likened the “savage” Indian to the “savage” Irish.\*<sup>2</sup>

\*See Chapter 3.



The 1629 Seal of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay also symbolizes to many historians the colonial dedication to education and the establishment of schools. Traditionally, the educational policies of the Massachusetts Bay Colony are considered the precursors to the development of public schooling in the United States in the early nineteenth century and to the belief that public schools could end crime, eliminate poverty, provide equality of opportunity, improve the economy, train workers, and create social and political stability. This belief in the power of schooling set the agenda for educational discussions through the twentieth century.

Therefore, I am beginning the story of the American school by focusing on the educational policies of the New England colonies. This discussion will provide a necessary background for understanding the development of public schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the educational crusade for the religious and cultural conversion of Native Americans discussed in Chapter 3.

## ***THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN COLONIAL SOCIETY***

Colonial education illustrates some important social functions of education. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, education in colonial New England was used to maintain the authority of the government and religion. People were taught to read and write so that they could obey the laws of God and the state. In addition, education in Puritan New England, with its emphasis on individual conduct, bore the seeds for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century view of education as a panacea for society. This view can be traced to the Protestant Reformation, one result of which was an emphasis on individual instruction for the development of piety with the goal of creating “the good society.” Whether or not education can create the good society continues to be an important question.

In addition, education in the colonies helped to maintain social distinctions. For many, the learning of Latin and Greek in grammar schools or with tutors and attendance at a college were a means of maintaining or gaining elite status. For others, attendance at an academy was the key to social mobility. From the seventeenth century to present times, there has been a continuous debate on the role of the school in creating social classes and providing for social mobility.

Also, education was increasingly considered a means of improving the material prosperity of society. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some colonialists and Europeans believed that scientific research would improve the quality of life for all people. They believed that the key to scientific research was freedom of thought and the freedom to pursue any form of inquiry. In England, the quest for intellectual freedom resulted in the establishment of academies which, eventually, were transplanted to the American colonies.

The concern about the advancement of science and intellectual freedom raised issues regarding the control of education. As I will discuss in this chapter, some people argued that intellectual freedom could be achieved only by separating schools from religious organizations that were supported by governments. It was argued that government-supported church schools primarily taught obedience to